

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-03 INR-05 PRS-01 IO-03 L-01 /039 W

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R 181450Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3955

S E C R E T BEIRUT 5000

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, LE, PLO

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER TAQLA'S VERSION OF HOW CEASEFIRE WAS
ACHIEVED AND HIS VIEWS ON THE FUTURE

REF: BEIRUT 4996

1. THIS MORNING I ASKED TAQLA HOW THE RECENT CEASEFIRE WAS
ACHIEVED AND WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE. HE REPLIED THAT AT
THE VERY OUTSET OF THE FIGHTING IN BEIRUT IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT
THE SITUATION WAS MUCH MORE COMPLEX AND SERIOUS THAN THAT OF MAY
1973, FOR IT OCCURRED AFTER A PROTRACTED PERIOD OF HEIGHTENING
TENSIONS SUCH AS THE RECENT FIGHTING IN SIDON, ISRAELI RAIDS
AND AN INCREASINGLY INEFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT. ALREADY SUNDAY
EVENING, APRIL 13, SERIOUS EFFORTS WERE UNDERWAY TO BRING ABOUT
A CEASEFIRE, BUT THIS WAS IMPOSSIBLE, DUE TO THE FEDAYEEN
DEMANDS THAT THOSE GUILTY OF THE SHOOTING SUNDAY OF THE BUS BE
HANDED OVER TO THEM. MONDAY CONVERSATIONS CONTINUED AND TAQLA
AND OTHERS DECIDED THAT A COMPROMISE MUST BE REACHED BETWEEN
GEMAYEL AND ABOU IYAD. THIS COMPROMISE, TAQLA SAID, HAD TO
APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN INITIATED BY PRESIDENT FRANGIE, FOR THE
PRESIDENCY HAD TO BE BUILT UP IN THE EYES OF ALL POLICIAL PARTIES.
TUESDAY TAQLA AND OTHER NON-MUSLIMS, UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF
HENRI PHARAON, CONVINCED GEMAYEL THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL TO HAND
OVER TO THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT MEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SHOOTING
OF THE BUS. GEMAYEL AGREED BUT SAID HE WOULD DO SO ONLY

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AT THE REQUEST OF FRANGIE. SIMULTANEOUSLY MAHMUD RIAD AND PRIME

MINISTER RACHID SOLH WENT TO SEE THE FEDAYEEN. LATTER ALSO AGREED TO THE COMPROMISE BUT AGAIN PROVIDED IT BE AT THE REQUEST OF FRANGIE. TAQLA IMPLIED IT WAS NOT EASY TO GET FRANGIE TO GO ALONG WITH THIS, THEY PERSUADED HIM BY POINTING OUT THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY RECEIVE THE CREDIT FOR THE COMPROMISE.

2. AS OF TUESDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 15TH, TAQLA SAID THE SOLUTION WAS IN SIGHT IN THAT THE ORGANIZED FORCES ON BOTH SIDES STOPPED FIRING AND WITHDREW FROM THEIR CONFRONTATION POSITIONS. WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, THE PROBLEM WAS TO HAVE WHAT TAQLA CALLED THE RABBLE CENTER BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL. ON BOTH SIDES THERE WERE DISSIDENT ELEMENTS. ON THE PART OF THE FEDAYEEN THESE WERE HABBASH'S AND JUBRIL'S REJECTIONISTS, RENEGADE IRAQI AND LIBYANS PLUS HOODLUMS SHOOTING. ON THE OTHER SIDE WERE EXTREMISTS, RIGHTISTS AND PHALANGE YOUTHS EAGER TO SETTLE OLD SCORES AND SHOOT AT SOMETHING MORE INTERESTING THAN PAPER TARGETS. WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY WERE ALSO DEVOTED TO CAREFULLY INJECTING INTO THE FIGHTING AREAS SECURITY FORCES, THE GENDARMES AND POLICE WHO COULD CONTRIBUTE TO DAMPENING THE FIRING AND EVEN ARRESTING SOME OF THE WORST ELEMENTS.

3. I ASKED TAQLA THE ROLE OF THE IMAM MUSA SADR. TAQLA DESCRIBED IT AS CONTINUOUSLY CONSTRUCTIVE, BUT HE WAS SOMEWHAT ON THE SIDELINES. YESTERDAY, THURSDAY, HOWEVER, WITH THE AGREEMENT OF ALL CONCERNED, THE IMAM CALLED OUT SOME OF HIS OWN MILITIA TO PATROL THE SHIAH AREAS IN AN EFFORT TO REDUCE VANDALISM, LOOTING AND INDISCRIMINATE SHOOTING.

4. ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEMS, ACCORDING TO TAQLA WERE THE INSISTENT DEMANDS OF VARIOUS AND SUNDRY POLITICOS TO INJECT THE ARMY INTO THE SCENE. THIS WAS OPPOSED BY ALL THOSE SEEKING A SOLUTION FOR WHAT ORDERS COULD BE GIVEN TO THE ARMY -- AGAINST WHOM SHOULD THEY OPERATE? THE PRIME MINISTER, AS WELL AS THE PRESIDENT, WERE ADAMANT ON THIS POINT. TAQLA SAID IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT IF THE ARMY HAD ENTERED THE FRAY, THE RESULT COULD WELL HAVE BEEN TOTAL CIVIL WAR.

5. TAQLA IS CURRENTLY OPTIMISTIC. HE BELIEVES ISOLATED INCIDENTS WILL CONTINUE BUT HE THINKS THAT THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM

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IS NOW SETTLED AND THERE IS A DESIRE ON BOTH SIDES TO STOP THE BLOODSHED.

6. THE LONGER RANGE PROBLEM, HOWEVER, IS MORE DIFFICULT, DUE TO THE TOTAL DISCREDITATION OF THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT AND ALSO SOME FEELING WHICH TAQLA TRIED TO AVOID THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS INEFFECTUAL. THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT WILL BE SHORT-LIVED. THE PRIME MINISTER MUST BE THE SCAPEGOAT AND MUST LEAVE. TAQLA

HOPES THE NEXT GOVERNMENT WILL BE ONE OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION
AND WILL INCLUDE THE MOST SENIOR LEADERS OF ALL POLITICAL PARTIES.
HE HOPES IT WILL BE SMALL, COMPACT AND THEREFORE EFFECTIVE. HE
RECOGNIZES IT WILL BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO ESTABLISH. YET
HE HOPES THAT THE LESSONS OF THE LAST FIVE DAYS WILL INSPIRE
POLITICAL LEADERS, AT LEAST BRIEFLY, TO SET ASIDE THEIR POLITICAL
IN-FIGHTING AND TO TRY TO LEAD THE COUNTRY OUT OF ITS CURRENT
IMPASSE.
GODLEY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONAL OPINION, PALESTINIANS, LIMITATION OF HOSTILITIES, UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GarlanWA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BEIRUT05000
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750137-0431
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750435/aaaabgjn.tel
Line Count: 124
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 75 BEIRUT 4996
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GarlanWA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <18 AUG 2003 by ellisoob>; APPROVED <26 AUG 2003 by GarlanWA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FOREIGN MINISTER TAQLA'S VERSION OF HOW CEASEFIRE WAS ACHIEVED AND HIS VIEWS ON THE FUTURE
TAGS: PINS, LE, PLO, (TAQLA, PHILIPPE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006